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THE FREUDIAN THEORY OF
THE NEUROSES.

BY

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NEW YORK.

REPRINTED FROM
THE
MEDICAL RECORD
March 1, 1913

WILLIAM WOOD & COMPANY
NEW YORK





JUNG'S MODIFICATION OF THE FREUD- IAN THEORY OF THE NEUROSES.*

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THE radical conceptions of Freud, with especial reference to the theory of the origin and cure of hysteria and the neuroses, although for some years lying dormant, have been, as we all know, within the recent past suddenly revived and have gained a strong hold upon scientific thought both here and abroad. Bitter as was the opposition to the Freudian theories among the majority of psychiatrists, yet staunch were many of his adherents. Perhaps no observer has so judiciously and in such an unbiased manner studied the Freudian doctrines as has the eminent psychologist Jung of Zürich. Originally an investigator of these theories and a supporter of them, he has gradually found himself going further away from them in their originality. The virulent criticisms assailing them have likewise been applied to Jung, although he has often expressed himself as one in search of truth and studying the subject with an unprejudiced mind.

Those who heard the most recent expressions upon the subject by Jung himself must have been impressed with the brief but comprehensive discussion of psychoanalysis which he delivered in October

*Paper read before the Neurological Section of the New York Academy of Medicine, November, 1912.

before the Neurological Section of the Academy of Medicine. However, the discussion which his remarks evoked indicated that the radical departures from the Freudian doctrines were not entirely grasped; in a conversation with the writer a day or two later it transpired that Jung himself was of the same opinion. With his approval I have undertaken a brief, critical review of his argument.*

As is well known, the original idea that hysteria and related neuroses took origin in trauma or mental shock of a sexual nature in early child life was given up fifteen years ago; for, as Jung says, it soon became obvious that sexual trauma itself could not be the real cause of a neurosis, since almost every human being has had a sexual shock in early youth, though of course we know that this serious consequence, a neurosis in later life, is relatively infrequent. Freud himself, the original expounder of this idea, soon learned that sometimes patients in whom an early traumatic event of a sexual nature seemed to be the basis of their psychoneurosis really invented the story, it being with them a phantasy or, in other words, a representative experience constructed entirely as a result of their mental imagery.

Through further investigation it became obvious that even a trauma which had really occurred could not always have produced such a violent effect as one sometimes determines through psychoanalysis; this apparent effect is really not so much the trauma itself, even if that trauma has occurred, but rather a morbid phantasy. Freud showed that sexual phantasy reaches back to early infantile age when it is connected with, or preceded by, bad habits and so-called infantile sexual perversities. In this conception of the etiology Freud traced back the neurosis to some sexual activity in early infancy, and this

*The author is indebted to Prof. Carl Jung for his kindness in reviewing this paper.

conception led him up to his more recent view that a neurotic is, so to speak, *transfixed* to a certain period of his early infancy; he even makes the attempt to classify or differentiate the particular neurosis according to the time or stage of infantile development in which the so-called "fixation" occurred.

From this standpoint the neurotic appears to be entirely dependent upon his infantile past, and all the morbid psychic manifestations in later life, the moral and intellectual conflicts develop through the powerful influence of the past. The Freud therapy and its leading thought is in full accordance with this theory, conceived by its author as an unraveling of subconscious attachment of the sexual "libido" to infantile phantasies and habits. Restoration to health demands that the "libido" become detached from the subconscious phantasies or infantile fixation.

This sums up briefly the essence of Freud's theory. Jung pertinently remarks that this conception warrants the important inquiry as to the reason of the fixation of the libido to the old infantile phantasies and habits. Nearly all of us have had infantile phantasies and habits corresponding to those of the neurotic; still we do not all become fixed with them, and do not necessarily become neurotic later on. The etiological element of the neurosis, therefore, does not consist of the mere existence of infantile phantasies, but must then be contained in the so-called fixation. All the manifold statements of the existence of infantile phantasies in cases of neurosis are worthless as having etiological significance, for the same phantasies are often found in normal individuals. To this, those of us who have had a larger experience give absolute concurrence. Hence it is only the fixation itself which seems to be characteristic.

Jung is careful to do full justice to the sincerity of Freud, and thinks that his investigations of psychoanalysis led him very reasonably to this hypothesis. Psychoanalysis, as we know, unveils the subconscious existence of manifold sexual phantasies which may have their final root in the infantile past and which often revolve around what the Germans have called the *kern*, or nucleus complex. This so-called complex, or subconscious system, has been spoken of in the male as the Œdipus complex and in the female as the Electra complex. These terms refer to the sexually emotional relationship between the son and the mother, or the daughter and the father.* Freud lays great stress upon the importance of this as a common point of fixation. As Jung says, the mere existence of this so-called conflict cannot be characteristic of the neurotic, since in some form there exists in all of us this complex in the subconscious. It is characteristic of each neurosis that the patient appears to be strongly attached to his complex.

Much has been said of this Œdipus and Electra complex; probably its importance has been unreasonably emphasized. In neurotic children it seems that phantasies are prone to assume a sexual character. A morbid affection, Œdipus complex, may not infrequently be bound up in such a neuropathic constitution. The Œdipus or Electra complex, according to both Jung and Freud, is always present. Its presence can be postulated. The only question

. *In the Iliad it is related that Œdipus, not knowing his mother, when he met her, misjudged the nature of his filial love and married her.

The normal love of a daughter for her father was perverted in Electra by her desire for revenge for his murder, so that its strength incited her to connive at the assassination of her own mother by her brother.

These are the most striking examples in history, or tradition, of this form of complex.

is whether or not it becomes reinforced in emotional upheaval so that when neurosis develops it stands out and becomes a prominent factor. In neurotics the Œdipus or Electra complex is of great importance. The question arises, is the intensity of the complex derived from fixation or from regression? Here there is an apparent difference of opinion between Freud and Jung.

We must admit that the hypothesis of fixation has more to commend it, since it is known that certain periods of human existence, especially the early years, the pubescent and adolescent, leave a determining trace throughout life. The pertinent question is whether or no this explanation is sufficient. It is true that in some cases the neurosis seems to have been present since the time of infancy, the nucleus complex having remained permanent and powerful throughout the entire life of the individual. If, however, we study the many cases that never show traces of neurosis and apparently become ill at a late period of life, the applicability of this principle becomes doubtful. If there is really a fixation, are we not allowed to base a new hypothesis upon this principle that sometimes, and at certain periods of life, the fixation becomes loosened and inefficacious, while at other times it suddenly becomes strengthened?

As a matter of fact it is a common observation that the outbreak of the disease rarely occurs at an indifferent time, but usually at a critical psychological moment and when a new psychological adjustment or adaptation is demanded. If fixation were the invariable basis of the neurosis we might expect a constant influence of it; that is, a constant neurosis throughout life. This is surely not the case. Jung refutes the idea of fixation, as expounded by Freud, in so far as the former does not believe that it is a question of an abnormal fixation

to a certain complex. According to Jung, there is a certain conservatism preserving ancient infantile ways of adaptation or infantile attitude. This is in itself a normal phenomenon and cannot be called "an abnormal fixation." Therefore, even in neurosis it is not that there is abnormal fixation. The neurotic, it must be remembered, has some very individual tasks in life—tasks, efforts, impulses not readily understood. The neurotic is obliged to relinquish, to give up much more of his infantile attitude than a normal being; the latter can remain unconscious of the many callings from within; need not make the constant effort at adaptation; can remain, as one might say, "unconscious of himself" throughout life. The normal being simply follows established lines, the usual avenues of life. He is not a "peculiar" being, has no particular and very individual life tasks. Jung gives the term "regression" a conceptual application more complete than does Freud and in this wider conception applies it as herein described.

Jung believes that all psychological phenomena may be considered as manifestations of energy in the same manner that all physical phenomena are so considered. This energy, variously conceived as desire, or any form of inherent force, he speaks of as the "libido." In a broad sense, he regards it as the vital energy. Its first manifestation he sees in the suckling as the instinct of *nutrition*. It will be recalled that Freud, on the other hand, considered this as *sexual* in character. Jung's conception of the transformation of the libido, its development through the phases of nutrition, sexuality, and the higher functions is splendidly elucidated in his work "Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido."

In the presexual stage of development the *libido* is still in part a *nutritional* function. In the *period of childhood* the libido first appears entirely in the

form of an *instinct for the partaking of food* which provides for the growth of the body. As the body develops, new domains are opened up successively for the application of the libido. The last domain for its application, predominant in its functional importance, is the sexuality which originally appears extraordinarily dependent upon the nutritional function. (The influence of nutritional factors on propagation of the lower animals and plants.) It is in the domain of sexuality that the libido acquires a shaping of tremendous significance so as to justify the employment of the term "libido." The libido here manifests itself as the instinct of propagation; originally in the form of an undifferentiated vital energy of growth.

Jung, when he refers to "libido," associates therewith the genetic concept which enriches the recent sexuality by an arbitrary amount of desexualized, primary libido—"urlibido." The transference of Freud's libido theory to psychotic conditions becomes possible only through this genetic concept of the libido, which in all directions extends beyond the recent sexuality.

The libido of the young at first manifests itself exclusively in the zone of the nutritional function; in the act of suckling, the food is ingested through rhythmic movements with all organs of pleasure and satisfaction. As the individual grows and his organs develop, the libido seeks new avenues for its needs, its manifestation, and its satisfaction. The primary model of the rhythmic function, which produces pleasure and satisfaction, must now be transferred to the zone of other functions with the ultimate goal in the sexuality. A considerable part of the hunger libido must be transformed into the sexual libido. This transition does not take place suddenly at the time of puberty, but it occurs very gradually during the course of the greater part of

childhood. The libido must free itself with difficulty and very slowly from the peculiarity of the nutritional function in order to enter into the characteristics of the sexual function. In the course of its ingestion the libido carries considerable material from the nutritional function into the sexual zone, thus readily accounting for the numerous intimate connections between the nutritional and the sexual function. When, after the conquest of the sexual zone, an obstacle of any kind arises against the new form of application of the libido, a regression takes place to the just passed earlier stages.

Normally liberated, the libido finds expression in desire, ambition, endeavor, etc., and is, in maturing adult life, devoted to an adaptation to the external world. Whenever the application of the libido, in the process of adaptation, meets with an obstacle, in the normal individual there is an accumulation, a damming, or storing up of this energy, manifesting itself in an increase of effort to overcome the obstacle. If the difficulty assumes unsurmountable proportions and the individual renounces the idea of overcoming it, the libido or energy becomes, figuratively speaking, anchored, and a *regression* results. This is to say, the libido gives up the task and, in the neurotic, assumes a former and more primitive adaptation. Jung understands this process of regression as a tendency to assume former juvenile life habits that have been stored up within the subconscious.

In his work, "Metamorphosis and Symbolism of the Libido," Jung develops the psychology of regression. Thought processes are conducted in two ways: (1) As directed thought, in which there is conduction in language only. This form produces new material, adapts, initiates reality, and attempts to deal actively with it; the attending mental processes are fatiguing; they demand constant en-

ergy liberation. (2) Associative thought, as in dreaming, thinking in pictures, or in the waking state as in revery, day dreams, etc.

Dreaming in pure imagery is attended by practically no mental effort; it is the use of spontaneously appearing reminiscences. Reality is disregarded, subjective desires are liberated. Here there is no productiveness in regard to adaptability. We can readily see here how the activity of the subconscious demonstrates itself. Waking or directed thought is progressive. Dreaming or associated thought is regressive. Here is indicated how the phantasies of child life, stored up in the subconscious, find their re-enaction in the regressive period following a psychic upheaval. Progressive thought ceases and associative thought and imagery—regressive psychic process—takes its place. By psychoanalysis the same mental state may be induced as in dreams in which regressive thought-excitation from the subconscious may be stimulated and the sometimes hidden desires of a personality revealed.

Thus we see the neurotic in time of psychic conflict and consequent regression returning to a primitive method of thought—associative thinking in imagery—as does the child and as did primitive peoples. Phantasies, too, thus arise; to the child the moon is a man, a shepherd of the stars; the clouds in the sky are sheep; a dog the husband of a cat, etc., etc.

Psychologically speaking, phantasy I understand to be a form of mental representation of psychic images, often of subconscious origin, quite distinct and severed from their usual relationship in actual experience. Someone has well defined a phantasy as a form of imaginative ornamentation—not to be taken with indubitable credence, but as allowable of an imaginative mind's vivid coloring and rich

embroidery in the coarse texture and dull neutral tints of truth. This well illustrates the form that phantasy may take; often based upon an experience, it at times assumes a grotesque form, or again is perverted into some elaborated idea. The phantasy rarely, or never, is the bare experience and is often a purely fanciful construction. The form and character of these phantasies reveal the nature of the pathological psychic content.

The juvenile life of the neurotic is, as we all know, full of emotional upheavals and unstable psychic processes, and I take it that Jung assumes that the process of regression brings to the surface these morbid entities. The disturbance may give rise to defects of nutrition, manifested as disturbances of metabolism and various hysterical outbreaks—psychic regressive manifestations. Here we may even have a revival of the so-called *Œdipus* or *Electra* complex. It is observed that the events of juvenile life suddenly assume unreasonable importance or are regressively animated, so to speak.

Finally, taking issue with Freud, Jung says that if we could take off this immediate impediment that is present in the path of life, the whole system of infantile phantasy would at once break down and become inactive. We cannot do this as a rule, and hence the obstacle must be overcome.

To return to the subject of phantasy:

The whole coterie of infantile phantasy, the real and the fanciful experiences of child life, do not give any etiological explanation of the neurosis; nor does fixation; the real issue lies in the inflating, so to speak, through the regressive libido, which has not found its natural outlet. In this we observe a most important therapeutic suggestion; namely, the proper directing or adaptation of the patient's libido in harmony with his environment. A sensitive and somewhat disharmonious character, as the

neurotic often is, will meet particular difficulties and more unusual tasks in life than the more normal individual who, as a rule, has but to follow the well-established line of the ordinary. The sexualisms of the neurotic phantasy are only secondary, being a consequence and not a cause of regression. The real cause of a neurosis is an innate resistance against new adaptations; not, as Freud says, infantile perversions.

Through psychoanalysis one seeks only to establish the connection between the conscious and the desire, the libido, in the subconscious, through restoring the energy or wish or desire to the field of consciousness; in this way the formerly split-off libido becomes again applicable to the new tasks of life. The suppressed desires of the individual should be brought forth and mirrored, so to speak, so that the subject may learn to make a voluntary selection and see for himself just what his attitude must necessarily be in the situation in which circumstances have thrust him. With the gentle, the patient, the persuasive operator the narrow, obstructed path will widen to the comprehensive view of the subject.

I am inclined to believe, however, that there are experiences that lie within the subconscious and entirely forgotten experiences of juvenile life that must of necessity in many instances be brought to consciousness, since I am sure that they have a directly operative influence upon the waking self.

From this standpoint psychoanalysis does not appear to be a mere reduction of the individual to his primitive desires, but rather an educational process, one tending to the development of strength, character, and directed will in the patient. Jung disapproves of the attempt in psychoanalysis invariably to force out the remote past. He doubtless believes that these juvenile experiences may, figura-

tively speaking, undergo sclerosis, the important elements being really disintegrated and having no influence upon the later mentality of the individual. He believes, however, that the juvenile experiences have of course a certain influence upon the later formation of a personality, but not the exaggerated influence which they apparently have in neurosis; here they become exaggerated, inflated, through regression. In psychoanalysis Jung adds the attempt to discover a way to the unsurmountable task and to find the manner of its accomplishment. The technique of psychoanalysis requires an understanding of the purposes of the method, and, if carried out according to the latest ideas of Jung, need never offend the sensibilities of the most reserved.

Psychoanalysis, then, as we now view it, has not a destructive, purely analytical purpose; it is rather constructive in an effort to synthesize the natural forces of the individual, directing him and enabling him to find himself; to lead him into an avenue which will afford a natural outlet for his creative ability, or energy, or libido. It is indeed an educational endeavor, making for the upbuilding of all which tends to develop the best within the individual. It is a scientific opposing force which rationally meets the demand that has given rise to the deteriorating influence of the various cults, isms, and all the demoralizing institutions of mental malpractice.

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